



News Release

WISCONSIN ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Guard's Civil Support Team conducts training exercise at Alliant Energy Center

Members of the Wisconsin National Guard's 54th Civil Support Team (CST) are conducting the unit's first homeland defense training exercise today. The day-long exercise is being held on the grounds of the Dane County Veterans Memorial Coliseum at the Alliant Energy Center and is expected to last until around 4 p.m.

The 54th CST consists of 22 highly skilled, full-time members of the Army and Air National Guard who are federally resourced, trained and evaluated, but fall under the command and control of the governor of Wisconsin. The team is designed to deploy rapidly to assist local first responders in determining the nature of a weapons of mass destruction incident, provide medical and technical advice, and pave the way for the identification and arrival of follow-on state and federal response assets.

The 54th CST is the first-response military team for terrorist events in Wisconsin. The unit assists local and state first responders with identification of various chemical, biological, and explosive agents and substances. The team advises on-scene commanders of current and projected consequences, and can serve as an advance party if additional federal forces are necessary.

The 54th CST is being currently being evaluated by the Department of Defense for formal certification as a fully trained, equipped and mission-ready Civil Support Team. The first CSTs were established in ten states in 1998 to protect against the growing threat of chemical and biological terrorism. Wisconsin's full-time unit was authorized in March 2004 and is now nearing completion of a lengthy certification process.

The Wisconsin National Guard currently has more than 6,360 personnel available to respond to state emergencies or to support homeland defense or security missions. This includes the Guard's 500-soldier Rapid Reaction Force, which is capable of responding on short notice anywhere in the state.

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